

CapitolRiver Council Board of Directors Meeting

August 18, 2020, via Zoom videoconference, and see notes from September 14 Email Motion and Officers meeting (below)

Board Member Attendees: Chris Beckstrom, Sandra Erickson, John Ganey, Bill Huepenbecker, Emily Larson, Paul Mandell, Shevek McKee, Crystal Meriwether, Will Travis, Erin Zolotukhin-Ridgway

Other attendees: Jon Fure, Lissa Jones-Lofgren, Kari Khalil, Lee Knutson, Aliya Mohamed, Janet Pope

Chair Shevek McKee called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Motion by John Ganey, seconded by Emily Larson, to approve the agenda. Motion passed.

The minutes for the July 21, 2020 board meeting were not sent with the agenda, so they will be reviewed and approved at a future meeting.

1. Request by Saint Paul 350: Kari Khalil and Janet Pope explained the request, which had been discussed at the August Public Realm Committee meeting. They explained that Saint Paul 350 members are asking all district councils to send a letter to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) that states opposition to Xcel Energy's Integrated Resource Plan. The plan must be approved by the PUC, and it includes a proposal to purchase fracked gas from a plant that would be built in Greater Minnesota and would be in operation for six decades. A draft letter from the CRC Board of Directors was provided to review, which is similar to a letter that has been sent to the PUC by the Saint Paul City Council, several other district councils, and other organizations and people. A board member asked if this is needed because of Minnesota's cold winters. Is natural gas a more reliable energy source in winter months? Ms. Pope said the State Department of Commerce and other organizations have studied this and found that there are adequate supplies of energy from renewable sources and from natural gas, so this new infrastructure is unnecessary. Chair Shevek McKee asked if anyone felt that this was beyond the scope of CRC's work. Normally the organization's recommendations are sent to the City Council and other City officials, and this recommendation would be sent to the PUC. No concerns were expressed.

The group discussed changing the letter, so that instead of concluding with "thanks for your consideration," we would add an action step. A board member suggested changing that to "Please take action to reverse Xcel's proposal to focus on fossil fuel production."

Motion by Crystal Meriwether, seconded by Emily Larson, to send the revised letter, on behalf of the CRC Board of Directors, to the PUC. The motion passed with 9 in favor and 1 abstained.

The following letter was sent to the PUC, on behalf of the CRC Board of Directors:

Dear Public Utilities Commission,

The CapitolRiver Council Board of Directors stands with residents across St. Paul for 100% clean, renewable energy for everyone and opposes construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure.

We particularly oppose the provision in Xcel Energy's latest Integrated Resource Plan (docket # 19-368), which currently includes planned construction of a fracked gas plant, which Xcel customers (including all of us) will pay for, and which Xcel plans to be in operation for six decades.

Science shows us that the burning of fossil fuels is the largest contributor to greenhouse gases which, in turn, lead to debilitating air pollution and changes in climate that put us all at risk. St. Paul's existing Climate Action

and Resilience Plan identifies the risks for poor air quality, extreme heat, and flooding in every neighborhood of the City, with especially devastating consequences for underserved areas with high poverty rates.

Besides reducing the need to burn fossil fuels, transitioning to renewable energies also creates local green energy jobs to provide lower-cost wind and solar energy that can be easily accessible to all people in every neighborhood.

District Councils are elected by the members of our districts to represent their best interests to the City. Together, the 17 councils represent the 307,000 residents of St. Paul.

We understand how much more we can accomplish when we work together. Therefore, we stand united with our neighbors, other district councils, and local organizations in supporting the goals contained in last December's resolution passed unanimously by the St. Paul City Council.

It reads in part:

RESOLVED that the City of Saint Paul will submit official comment in the Public Utilities Commission review process of Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Integrated Resource Plan expressing opposition to construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure in this time of climate crisis; now therefore be it further

RESOLVED that the City of Saint Paul will advocate for including more renewable, equitable, and locally produced energy plus storage in Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Integrated Resource Plan so that our city can meet the bold commitments for reducing emissions and energy burdens as expressed in our Climate Inheritance Resolution and Climate Action and Resilience Plan.

On behalf of the CapitolRiver Council, which represents residents and workers in District 17, including Downtown St. Paul and the Capitol area, we support and endorse this clear statement of intention to the City of St. Paul, to the investor-owned utility Xcel, and to the Public Utility Commission. Xcel and our society must invest in 100% clean, renewable energy for everyone on the earliest possible timeline without investing in new fossil fuel infrastructure of any kind.

The stakes are too high for us to continue investing in out-of-date, dirty, and increasingly expensive fossil fuel technology when there are cleaner and less expensive alternatives.

Please take action to reverse Xcel's proposal to focus on fossil fuel production.

2. Advancing Racial Equity – Lissa Jones-Lofgren asked if anyone had feedback about the CRC Development Review Committee meeting discussion about the University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice project. Kirsten Deleard, Mapping Prejudice Project Director, had provided an overview of the project, which involves creating maps that shows where people who were not White were prevented from buying property and building wealth. The maps are created by looking at property records for racial covenants. An attendee said that it was surprising to learn that there was segregation in Minnesota, because that is usually associated with the Jim Crow laws in southern states. Ms. Jones-Lofgren said many of the policies such as racial covenants and red lining were developed in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v Board of Education ruling, which declared school segregation unconstitutional, and ordered all states to end segregation "with all deliberate speed," but not with specific deadlines. By putting up powerful obstacles that prevented people of color from living in certain neighborhoods, school segregation naturally followed. A board member said the Minnesota History Theatre had promoted the play titled "Not For Sale," about experiences of families of color as they attempt to buy homes in all-White neighborhoods in Minneapolis and Saint Paul (the play was cancelled due to the pandemic). Other attendees expressed interest in learning more about volunteer opportunities to support the project. Jon Fure will follow up and find more information on how we can be involved. The board had also planned to discuss the article by

Minnesota Author Marlon James, titled, “Despite fame, whites still see him as threatening” in the July 19, 2020, Star Tribune. The board will discuss the article at a future meeting.

3. Board Member Recruiting and Annual Meeting Planning – Jon Fure and Aliya Mohamed have been working on creating the Annual Report and agenda for the Annual Meeting. The main item is to elect new board members, and per the CRC bylaws, up to nine members can be elected, and there are currently seven candidates. Shevek McKee will create a Google form for voting if there are more than nine candidates. Last year, a lot of people provided good feedback during the small group discussions, but since this meeting will be via Zoom, the suggestion is to discuss the article, “Most Public Engagement is Worthless.” The goals will be to give people opportunities to vent about what isn’t working, or where it feels at time like our work isn’t very influential, and also to do some brainstorming about what we can do that will make us more influential, and that will make this a more meaningful leadership experience for board members. The agenda will be posted on the website and sent out via email.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

September 14 Email Motions and Officers meeting

- Request motion of support for the Downtown Improvement District:

Jon Fure emailed board members on September 14, asking board members to vote on a draft letter of support for the proposed Downtown Improvement District. The Downtown Alliance has been working on the proposal for the past 2-3 years, which would involve A) creating a new tax that would be charged to commercial buildings in a certain area, and B) creating a governing body that represents those properties to determine how to allocate that revenue. If board members approve, the letter will be sent to the City Council members and be included in the public record for the public hearing on that proposal. The CRC board has discussed this but has not taken a position either in support of or against the proposal.

Some board members expressed concerns about the draft, because the district does NOT cover all of Downtown, and that Downtown residents should have a voice in the decisions that are made by this new governing body. The concerns were conveyed to Council Member Noecker, along with the following letter:

As a downtown stakeholders and community organizers, the CapitolRiver Council Board enthusiastically supports the implementation of the Special Service District. An improvement district is a powerful instrument in adding vitality to our downtown neighborhood and we believe it will provide opportunities to increase value for all downtown stakeholders.

It is crucial that downtown continue to get its appropriate share of regular city services, however, this district will create more revenue for services in our neighborhood, and the people who are paying into the district will be able to determine how it is spent. This will create opportunities to develop new ways to improve the livability of Downtown, whereas presently any proposals to increase investment Downtown must compete with every other potential City budget item, and with pressure to decrease taxes and fees for Saint Paul taxpayers. We believe this is a reasonable way to increase investment in our neighborhood.

- Sept. 21 CRC Officers Meeting. Attendees: Nick Cusick, Amy Lee, Crystal Meriwether, Shevek McKee, Will Travis
Jon Fure emailed board members CRC Board Members that we have been offered a scholarship to extend the employment of Aliya Mohamed, who was hired as a summer intern through the City of Saint Paul’s Right Track program. CRC budgeted \$1,500 for her wages, and staff in the Parks and Recreation Department said that we could receive a scholarship to pay her wages for 10-12 hours per week at \$12 per hour through December 2020.

No one expressed concerns, so he recommended that the officers vote to extend her employment based on the available scholarship. Her job title will be Marketing and Technology Specialist.

CRC Officers motion to keep Aliya Mohamed as a part-time employee, and to pay her wages that will not exceed \$1,872. Motion passed.

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